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ABSTRACT

School library pilot projects in New York State and the Westchester, New York, Library System are examined as a foundation for building the Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) School Library System. The creation of this BOCES system is charted from the processes of obtaining the planning grant, state mandates, and funding, through preparing needs assessments for salaried and volunteer workers, choosing a database, and developing standards for the database. The University of Toronto Library Automation System (UTLAS) was chosen as a bibliographic utility because it was being used by the contiguous public library system and community college, it had experience dealing with school library clients, and it could produce a local record for school library members. The UTLAS current cataloging experiment is discussed; the progress of the project during the first year is evaluated in relation to the BOCES plan of service; problem areas are pointed out; future development is projected; and the benefits of membership in the library network are enumerated. (Author/KM)

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GETTING THE ACT TOGETHER:

NETWORKING WITH UTLAS

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Southern Westchester BOCES
School Library System Council
July 1986

In 1978 The Task Force on the Role of the School Library Media Program in the (U.S.) National Program observed that "School library media specialists endure a special kind of isolation from being unique among other faculty members...."[1] Two years later Bea Angus, an IASL member who had researched the pilot school-library systems in New York State, noted that school media specialists had not been "well prepared for networking through their work experience or through conventional library school programs."[2] Angus agreed with the Task Force that a willingness to share, to modify policies and to communicate and plan with other librarians is crucial to the building of an effective network.[3] This is the experience we bring to you today.

In the area we represent, the southern half of the county just to the north of New York City, we have 35 public school districts and about 55 private or religious schools. Many of them belong to the Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services, commonly known as BOCES, which offers shared services from occupational education to film and audiovisual service. So in BOCES we have the tradition of shared resources.

In 1978 the Board of Regents of the State of New York first proposed legislation to encourage sharing of school-library resources, coordinated by the BOCES such as ours. The goal was

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to develop regional cooperative networks to bring these BOCES into existing interlibrary loan networks. Twelve pilot systems were set up and formal cooperation between these systems and functioning public-library and research-library systems was part of the plan. Between 1979 and 1984 these pilots demonstrated how resource-sharing could improve the picture for students in elementary and secondary schools. Southern Westchester BOCES was not one of the 12 pilots but it was a recipient of shoestring funds from the local umbrella resource agency, called INTERSHARE, which was a regional multi-type library network.

What kind of relationships existed between individual schools in our area in the late '70s and '80s? Mainly informal ones built on contact through professional associations. These were first strengthened when our BOCES received a mini-grant to produce a union list of serials for its schools. Individual schools now contacted each other to borrow periodicals, or more typically, to get photocopies of the articles.

The other unifying step was a competitive ECIA Chapter II grant written at our BOCES with input from a small group of school librarians. Project ARTS was a cooperative-collection effort. Four high schools and the nearby State University of New York at Purchase (which has a heavy emphasis on the arts) each purchased materials in a special arts area--film, dance, music etc.--and made these materials available to all BOCES members through a microfiche catalog. An essential factor in this grant was the inclusion of an academic library in the planning.

The Public Library Model

The groundwork was laid. The school libraries of southern

Westchester also had a model in the public libraries of our County. In some areas of New York public libraries were joined into cooperative systems as early as 1954; the Westchester Library System, known as WLS, was chartered in 1959. The initial grant of $10,000 from the state was based on the 1950 census. Of the 38 eligible public libraries, 30 joined. An existing union catalog was switched to WLS headquarters. Delivery service was established twice a week to member libraries for the purpose of exchanging materials and intrasystem mail. Areas of immediate cooperation were centralized purchasing and processing and cataloging. With specialized consultants for technical services, children's, young-adult, adult and audiovisual services there was planned, supported collection development. Rotating collections reinforced weak areas. Monthly reviewing sessions provided book-selection assistance. A countywide microfiche catalog for books published since 1978, called WESTCAT, is distributed to all WLS libraries and is cumulated quarterly.

Currently all 38 public libraries belong to WLS. In 1983 WLS selected UTLAS as its cataloging utility. The UTLAS system provided an authority-control system which made it possible to introduce new subject headings and to change outdated ones on-line. It provided the ability to access catalog records and to update individual member holdings on-line. And it yielded both WESTCAT and print catalogs such as one for Large Print Books. After a six-month trial, WLS became the first American public-library system to become an UTLAS user.

School Needs and State Leadership

But back to the schools. It was apparent early on that the school libraries in the pilot projects were reaping definite advantages. Interlibrary loan was no longer dependent on personal contacts. A fiche catalog of member-library materials produced in the pilot system nearest us saved time. The resources available to students in the pilot-project schools had been greatly multiplied.

At the same time costs of library resources were rising. In 1977 the average cost of a hard-cover book in the United States was $19.22; by 1984 it was nearing $30.00. Postage rates were rising, causing hikes in the cost of shipping books and in the costs of magazine subscriptions. At the same time, technologies had improved. Copying machines were available in most schools and microfiche or microfilm collections were found in many high schools.

There was also a continuing change in education, from the textbook-and-lecture method to one which tried to broaden the student's view and experience. Students were now required to read from a wide variety of sources. Many did advanced research projects; some did original research. The need for a spectrum of resources was being felt at a time when costs were rising and some school budgets were being voted down.

In the spring of 1982 the state's Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents sponsored a series of workshops across New York State to obtain grassroots input on how to improve the quality of education in the state. As a school librarian, I attended our local workshop. There were classroom teachers, principals, superintendents, college teachers, people from business,

and public librarians as well as state leaders. In our group the public librarian from my town pointed out that because of the public-library system the local public library was able to offer resources far beyond its walls. There was a unanimous vote by our group to recommend state support for cooperative networking at the school-library level.

The state had already funded the 12 pilot projects. In July 1984, to continue our timetable, all BOCES received a directive to apply for planning grants which would lead to the formation of school-library systems throughout the state. In October 1984 all public-school librarians in our area were called to a meeting and volunteers sought to help write the planning grant. In addition, all chief school administrators received a letter asking them to sign a statement of intent to participate in the new system. This contact with administrators has been carefully maintained.

Needless to say, the planning-grant application was due within a month. The deadline was met, due primarily to the organizational skills and competence of Donna Barkman, the recently hired film librarian at BOCES who found herself with a new title: Planning-Grant Coordinator.

The grant gave BOCES $20,000 in 1984-85 to develop a three-year plan of service. The planning-grant process was to be as follows:

1. Identify a planning-project coordinator.
2. Identify and appoint at least a nine-member committee representative of the providers and users in the potential system area. It should include teachers, administrators and librarians.
3. Provide evidence of consultation with public and reference/research library systems.
4. Work towards the presentation of a Three Year Plan of Service due, with a 1985-86 budget, by April 30, 1985.

Who did the work? Ten public and private school librarians, the head of technical services at SUNY Purchase, the head of inter-library services for WLS, a computer coordinator for a local school district and two BOCES staff members made up the original council. The school librarians were to be people truly interested in developing a system and should represent school libraries large and small, public and private, with all grade levels and with resources both sophisticated and relatively simple, that is to say, affluent and poorly supported.

To help us start up, a Question and Answer memorandum from the late Bea Griggs, the state chief of school libraries, was sent to each council, and there was an answer to one question which proved to be clairvoyantly true. The question was, "Where can more information be obtained?" The answer said, "Public and 3R's system personnel can be particularly helpful with advice on data base (union list) development, inter-library loan policies and procedures and other functions common to all types of systems." A glorious understatement.

Beyond the initial planning grant, we had the long-range mandate to each system. The most important mandates were:

1. Establish the means for locating materials within the system through a machine-readable catalog which would be consistent with standards for regional bibliographic data bases.

2. Establish procedures for accepting, verifying and responding to interlibrary loan requests, and a delivery system for sharing materials.

3. Describe the plans for cooperating with school and other types of library systems.

4. Describe the means by which the system will be compatible in its computerized and technical operations with those of other systems in the state.

5. Identify special client-group needs.

6. Describe procedures for needs assessment, program development and staff development.

7. Describe the means for cooperative collection development.

No doubt you are wondering at this point where all the money would come from to achieve these goals and the ultimate goal, which should not be lost sight of as we describe what one of my Columbia professors used to call "how I run my library real good." That goal was and is to provide the students of New York State with greatly increased access to resources for study and research.

Funding

As in the case of the Westchester Library System, funding from the state made all 48 (42 BOCES and 6 big-city) school library systems possible. There was the initial planning grant of $20,000. The first operating year, 1985-86, our System received from the state $65,000, based on our serving fewer than 100,000 students. Systems serving larger student populations received up to $120,000, and New York City got much more. As a result of lobbying our state legislators, we also received a special grant of $20,000 directly from the State Legislature.

For the second operating year, 1986-87, funding will be determined on a more equitable formula basis, with four components:

1. A flat-rate grant based upon the number of pupils in the service area. This gives us $72,000.
2. The number of students in member schools, times .19.
3. $350 per public-school district.
4. $2.10 per square mile of the district.

For 1986-87 the System will also receive $17,000 from METRO to continue retrospective conversion of records. METRO is the conduit for both state and federal funds for libraries.

Staffing

Who does the work to make it go? The Commissioner's regulations laid it out clearly: each system shall employ a full-time coordinator and a clerk assigned full-time to that coordinator.

The coordinator would be responsible for networking activities: building a union catalog, establishing interlibrary loan procedures, developing a cooperative collection-development plan, planning for staff development. The tasks were well thought out: these were all activities which large school districts had been doing for years, but the isolated librarian in a smaller school district was not part of any such network. Now a network was at hand.

The qualifications for the coordinator's position were equally demanding. We needed a Renaissance person who not only was certified as a school library media specialist but who had computer background and in addition held a certificate as School Administrator and Supervisor, required in New York of school administrators. And the salary was modest. What seemed like an adequate salary for some parts of New York State was not very adequate for our high-cost, high-tax region. We were fortunate to find a person with both school and public library experience who also had the foresight to earn a certificate in computer science. This summer, regrettably, Francene Costello could not come to IASL because she is finishing the 24 class credits for that administrator's certificate, well in advance of the 1989 deadline set by the state. Normally she is a highly available person, not one who is "in a meeting" or "away from her desk."

Our good fortune extended to our ten-month clerk. When the job

was posted at the BOCES instructional services office, a young film inspector who apparently had exhausted the possibilities of that job applied for it, willing and able to take the on-the-job training which UTLAS offers. 75% of her time is spent at data entry or preparing for it, 10% on interlibrary loan and 15% on typing reports, memos, letters and miscellaneous chores. We found her so amiable, competent and interested in her work that the Council voted to spend part of the 1986-87 budget on two weeks' summer time for her to keep ahead of the avalanche of work.

While the state mandate required a full-time paid coordinator with no other duties, we, the building-level people who represented the member schools, were to make up the Council which would direct the new System. As with many of our institutions, the hours of volunteer help have been considerable.

Essentially, the same group of librarians which worked on the planning grant ultimately made up the school-library representation on the Council. We asked the school district computer coordinator and the SUNY and WLS representatives to continue on the official Council. It was total commitment and immersion. Referring to my 1984-85 calendar, I counted 22 meetings between November 1, 1984 and May 31, 1985. Someone remarked that it was like having a second job.

Council members were selected on two criteria: first, interest, and second, his/her representation of an agency, library or user group needed to provide balance on the Council. We now have 18 members representing the groups previously described as well as

teachers, administrators and Southern Westchester residents. Council members were elected for staggered three-year terms. To avoid any favoritism, the alphabetic list of Council members was numbered 1,2,3, 1,2,3. The 1s had a one-year term, the 2s had a two-year term etc., each with the privilege of re-election.

Each local school or school system appointed a liaison to represent the district in the System. The liaisons would take the requests of the System to their districts; for example, they coordinated the completion of the Member Plans we will describe, and would bring the needs of the individual districts back to the System.

Choosing UTLAS

The timetable, as we look back from two years' distance, was awesome. In mid-March 1985 the writing of the Three Year Plan of Service began; by April it was completed and sent off. By May we had decided on a bibliographic utility.

During this formative period two essential committees were set up from among the Council members: a committee to work on Current Cataloging Procedures and one to develop Cataloging Standards. Council members had also formed a committee on an ad hoc basis for work on public relations, while the entire Council looked into automation. Later committees would be formed for staff development, for interlibrary loan, for public relations and legislation and for automation.

The first priority of the Council was to develop a union catalog of materials listing the resources of the schools in the System. At a meeting in December 1984, the Council discussed the possible methods of catalog conversion and the advantages of a centralized approach.

We relied heavily on the guidance of the experienced technical-services librarians from the public and academic sector, and decided to meet during the month of January 1985 with several firms offering catalog-record conversion.

This was in a sense a trial by firey ignorance. With the exception of the technical-services people, none of us, not even the computer coordinator, had experience with a bibliographic utility. We listened to presentations by Carrollton Press, by an OCLC representative and by UTLAS.

UTLAS, it seemed to us, had several advantages:

1. It already had considerable experience dealing with school-library clients.
2. It had already been used by the Westchester Library System and by the local Community College library.
3. It would produce a local record, including any variations.

UTLAS would provide us with MARC-format cataloging records in a separate Southern Westchester BOCES on-line catalog, with the holdings of each participating library readily visible. Records would be entered from the shelf lists of each participating school but the work would be done at the central BOCES facility. In the future records could also be accessed by those schools having terminals. And UTLAS provided the possibility of a COM catalog. They also promised to download the holdings of individual schools onto disks when that service was wanted, charging the schools wanting the service.

We chose UTLAS. As an up-to-the-minute addition, I can report that all four BOCES on Long Island contracted with UTLAS this spring, inspired by our lead.

Once titles are entered in a database, then what? UTLAS could provide on-line access to the database for those schools with a terminal which meets ASCII standards or a microcomputer equipped with communications software and a modem. Only a very few schools have this hardware but it was felt that as prices drop, other schools would be able to purchase it and be able to use REFCATSS, the reference-use, search-only capability provided by UTLAS. From the beginning, however, it was important to the Council that everyone, not just those in richer districts, could use the UTLAS system. A phone call to BOCES is all that is needed to get an immediate search of the database, interlibrary loan service, or help with any problem. Since all schools can be served this way, the Council decided against a microform catalog, which several of the original pilot systems had developed.

There were two things we wanted UTLAS to handle in the first year: retrospective conversion of print non-fiction and an experiment in current cataloging. The plan for retrospective conversion of member holdings was made: we would enter only titles of books copyrighted 1980 or later, and in 1985-86 we would begin with the 300s. In the second year of operation we would input the 900s, including biography and collective biography, and in 1987-88, the 800s and the 500s. We would also continue to add 300s in the second and third years and 900s and 300s in the third year of operation. We require that all participants make an annual inventory of the sections they have in the database to keep the database clean.

The opinion of the elementary-school librarians was always considered in these decisions, since we did not want them to feel that the System was primarily for the high schools.

The Current Cataloging Experiment

In the experiment in current cataloging, all print non-fiction titles for which the participating libraries wanted cards would be entered in the data base and cards produced. At the discussion stage about 20 schools showed interest in participating in this service. The cost to the school was set at $1.00 per title; UTLAS estimated that the remaining cost would be $1.80, to be paid for by the System. To keep costs down, a lottery was considered to limit the number of schools in the project to about twelve. The Council feared that too much of its project budget would be spent subsidizing catalog-card production. About this time Baker and Taylor, the vendor most used in our area, offered card sets for 25 cents. The number of experimenters dropped to 13, of whom 12 actually participated. Two were elementary schools, the rest secondary.

There was a period of debugging. A trial run was made in December and in January 1986 and the final card sets started to come in February. And there were some curious problems.

First, there was a high percentage of second cards for each title, i. e., bibliographic information, including the contents notes we had asked for, tended to lap over to a second card.

Second, on the List of Local Practices Style Sheet, page two, under "Additional Local Practices" number two calls for deleting the LC subject sub-heading "Juvenile Literature." One elementary librarian received cards for Let's Visit Bolivia and many others in that series with no subject cards at all. Unfortunately Bolivia was tagged as a 650 field, with a second indicator of "1" on the MARC record. This tagging denotes the field as a juvenile subject heading. UTLAS, in its original profile for the System, had misinterpreted our instructions

to remove "Juvenile Literature" as a sub-heading. They had profiled our System to exclude all subject headings tagged 650 with a second indicator of "1".

We expect that both problems will be solved by the fall.

Included among the handouts today is a copy of the List of Local Practices as well as the Current Cataloging Procedures which were followed. Representatives of elementary, junior and senior high schools were on the Standards Committee. Cataloging practices of the public-library system were carefully examined. Both the members of this Committee and the membership at large were vocal in defending their local practices. It was obvious that each library would have to give up some sovereignty or unique style of classification to conform to a uniform style. For example, most members saw the need to accept LC headings instead of Sears. Variations are expensive.

The First Year of Operation

The best way to evaluate what was actually done in 1985-86 is to quote from the Coordinator's first annual report.

1. There are now 93 school libraries, representing 27 public-school districts,in the System. In addition, 40 private or religious schools are members.
2. A contract was signed with UTLAS International U. S. in December 1985 to become vendor for both retrospective entry and current cataloging.
3. We have established a functioning automated database, with 86 schools participating in retrospective conversion. The system acknowledges receipt of these shelflist cards promptly. More than 8100 holdings have been entered.

We might digress from the report here to say that before these shelf-

list cards were entered, all members were given a list of steps to take to prepare for retrospective conversion. Weeding--and we are indebted to the Calgary Board of Education for their guidelines--sorting, adding the LC number, or if none exists, the ISBN number, were all required.

4. Since we were awarded two grants by METRO, we were able to enter the 900s into the database ahead of schedule.
5. In addition, 1300 titles purchased under Project ARTS are being downloaded from MARC tapes into our database.
6. Current-cataloging subscribers have submitted more than 1400 non-fiction titles for processing and database inclusion and have received streamed (alphabetized) cards for their libraries.
7. Interlibrary loan policies and procedures have been prepared by a Council Committee and disseminated. There has been active interlibrary loan of periodical articles but actual ILL statistics are still being compiled.
8. In March 1986 various administrative departments of BOCES gave the System money to offer BRS searching on a trial basis to students, teachers, administrators and staff of all member schools. It was well utilized.
9. Weekly delivery service is now offered to those schools which would not ordinarily get delivery because they are not members of the film library.
10. The sixth edition of our Union List of Serials has been produced and distributed. Through an LSCA grant, the next edition will be put into the OCLC database by METRO by January 1987.

With a database still quite small, we consider this the inputing period. But suppose a member library wants to borrow a particular book, which, after all, is the ultimate purpose of setting up this structure? The borrowing library calls BOCES. BOCES checks on its terminal to see if the book is in the Southern BOCES database or in the Westchester Library System database, our first two levels of borrowing. If it is in another school, the borrower may find it fastest to work out a point-to-point loan. If it is in a public library, the school librarian can either ask BOCES to borrow it and wait for the next weekly delivery or send the student directly, assuming he/she has a WLS card. Since many school assignments are not long-term ones--and since students everywhere wait until the eleventh hour--it may be faster to take the latter course.

Let us assume it is not available from either local source. BOCES will send an interlibrary loan request to the METRO Clearinghouse and METRO will search for the title in academic, public or special libraries or in three other school-library systems in the New York metropolitan area. Still can't find it? Then the Clearinghouse will request it through NYSILL, the statewide ILL system. At this point I would refer you to a January 1986 study called New York State Interlibrary Loan: Recommended Redesign.[4]

Staff development will continue to be heavily emphasized, to dispel that sense of isolation which those of us in small systems feel keenly. For several years we have had an annual workshop meeting with our public-library counterparts. A reference workshop hosted by academic librarians concentrated on skills expected of incoming freshmen and was videotaped so it could be circulated to those unable to

attend. A workshop on videotaping and the copyright problem and one on cataloging microcomputer software were held. A brainstorming session on the implementation of the State's Regents Action plan--which has mandated a whole new approach to teaching library skills in the junior-high--took place. A week after school opens next month a State Education Department person will bring lesson plans for this new curriculum. The scope and sequence of the curriculum was to have come in June.

For most of us there is a dire need for professional education in the area of automation. This spring the Staff Development Committee scheduled a demonstration of Wilsonline and in the fall we plan at least one and probably two workshops on the subject of integrated library management systems.

In addition to acquiring verification tools for data entry and maintaining good relations with administrators and teachers in member schools, the headquarters staff also publishes a quarterly newsletter called Tracings. It brings us news of state legislation, workshops, conferences, groups tangential to libraries, dates to remember or consider, and lists of materials added to the professional collection.

The Coordinator's larger role with members is as a communicator. No longer are we paddling our canoes alone. Memos and flyers concerning professional meetings in the County and in New York City are sent out, and two meetings with the liaisons for the districts were held.

In one of these meetings liaisons were presented with the Member Plan referred to earlier. There was a section for the District and a section for each building in the District. The Member Plan was actually

a combination needs-assessment and self-evaluation. It asked each district about communication procedures, staffing, district goals and communication with the System. The building-level section determined library resources and services, staffing and goals. For those of us without district supervisors--and that is the rule rather than the exception in our area--responding to the questions in the Plan brought us closer to our district colleagues. We could see where they were and how we could assist each other. So the process itself was helpful.

The information from these Member Plans will be compiled on DBase III to help meet area library needs, for example, to recognize where there are special collections or note the use of computers in various libraries.

The Coordinator goes to many state-level meetings but still manages time to consult, for example, with librarians in special schools such as those for the deaf or for emotionally-disturbed children. She is our link with other systems. And she is our legislative cheerleader: it was headquarters personnel who lobbied for, and got, increased school-library funds.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, there was plenty of work for all. Inventory was done with special zest--and the realization that there must be a better way--both last year and this June. Weeding has taken on new importance. We continued our point-to-point contacts with other schools for the periodicals needed for that special research project. These may be magazines for which we could not intellectually justify a subscription or perhaps we simply could not

afford. On one occasion this spring, an eighth-grader doing research on nuclear power plants showed me two citations among the twenty he had received by using Search Helper. We did not have the magazines. A neighboring high-school librarian not only had them but put them at my front door on his way home. I photocopied them and returned them to his front door, which turned out to be closer than our schools are. Ironically, one of the articles was from Soviet Life and described the exemplary safety precautions at a plant in a place called Chernobyl, an irony which was not lost on the bright eighth-grader.

Our Current Status

Now, a little more than a year since we were formally organized, what is the good news and the bad news?

The good news is that we have not only achieved our goals but have surpassed them. We are ahead of schedule in retrospective conversion. The 900s will be entered almost a year ahead of plan because we received additional funding and because the data-entry has gone even more smoothly than we had hoped. The 800s, once scheduled for 1987-88, will be entered by the end of this year. We have designated the 500s as the next entries.

Funding for 1986-87 is very good news. The official state allocation, as we noted, has gone from $65,000 to $91,000, thanks to an increase to $5.1 million for the school-library systems.

The bad news is that three city school systems, one sizable school district and three prestigious private schools in the area have not yet joined the system. Their reasons for staying out are, first, that they feel their libraries have enough money to buy whatever they need, and second, that they are afraid of being raided--although the testimony from the pilot systems indicates this is not

the case. The smaller, specialized schools which have abstained believe that their collections are so limited in audience that they would not be useful to borrowers in a system, nor would they need to borrow for their specialized student population.

The second piece of bad news is that the cost of current cataloging, including cards, was much more than UTLAS had estimated. Cooperative collection development is still a year off, but that was in the original Plan of Service. We knew we would need time to analyze the Member Plans and to poll the membership about future directions. Only then will we know what subject areas need concentration and in what schools or districts they can be practicably housed.

The benefits of being in such a system cannot be overstated. School libraries without telephones suddenly were able to get them, because business had picked up. A library which could not get a computer approved two years ago has the go-ahead now. Professional development is no longer confined to what you can snatch at a library conference, if, indeed, you can get approval for the conference. We are now in the mainstream of libarianship.

But the most valuable benefits of all may be what we have here today--the interaction between those of us in the school-library profession--and the bonds between us and our colleagues in public and academic libraries. We have come to know each other and to work with each other for the common goal of helping students reach their potential.

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